

What is Claimed is:

1. An apparatus comprising:
at least N parallel gain stages, each gain stage having an input and an output, wherein each gain stage is individually driven at its input by only one of X related spatial channels, and produces at its output an amplitude adjusted version of the only one of X related spatial channels, wherein N and X are integers, N is greater than 4, and X is one of equal to and not equal to N; and
a circuit that downmixes the outputs of the N parallel gain stages to M channels, wherein M is an integer greater than 0 and less than N.
2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the N parallel gain stages are user-adjusted.
3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the gain of one of the N parallel gain stages is adjusted independently of the gain of the remaining N-1 parallel gain stages.
4. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the X related spatial channels are a left, right, center, right surround, and left surround channels of an audio program.
5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the X related spatial channels further include a low frequency effects channel of the audio program.
6. A method comprising:
adjusting an amplitude of at least one of X related spatial channels to create X adjusted spatial channels; and
downmixing the X adjusted spatial channels to M channels, wherein X is an integer greater than 4 and M is an integer greater than 0 and less than X,

and wherein adjusting precedes downmixing.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein adjusting is controlled by an end-user.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein one of the X related spatial channels is a primary audio channel and at least one of the other of the X related spatial channels is a remaining audio channel.

9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising:
comparing the primary audio channel with at least the remaining audio channel to determine a ratio of the primary audio channel to at least the remaining audio channel; and
automatically adjusting one of the primary audio channel and the remaining audio channel when a predetermined value for the ratio is not met.